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Accountability in Education

POLICY FRAMEWORK—JUNE 1995

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ALBERTA
EDUCATION

Office of the Minister

1995-07-10

To: School Board Chairmen
Alberta School Boards Association
Alberta Teachers' Association
Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association
Public School Boards' Association of Alberta
College of Alberta School Superintendents
Alberta Home and School Councils' Association
Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta

The provincial plan for education calls for the development of a more open and accountable education system. The MLA Implementation Team on Accountability, chaired by Victor Doerksen and with members, Jocelyn Burgener and Mark Hlady, has concluded its consultations with Albertans and submitted its report.

The enclosed document, *Accountability in Education Policy Framework*, builds on the recommendations of the MLA Team and sets out a phased implementation schedule of planning and reporting requirements founded on the work that boards already do. School boards will determine how schools will align their plans and reports with board and provincial directions and policy.

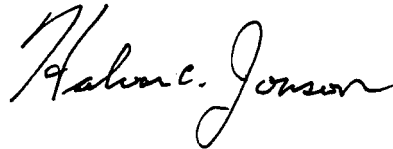
The *Guide for Developing 1995/96 School Board Interim Education Plans*, distributed by Alberta Education in April, provides important information for completing the interim reports that are necessary for September 30. These plans will mark the beginning of an accountability cycle designed to ensure that our education system is focused on improving education for our students. School board plans and reports will be submitted to my office through the Policy and Planning Branch, Alberta Education.

.../2

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I look forward to working with Albertans to continue implementing an accountability system that will provide timely and open reporting, will focus on results and will use those results to improve education at all levels. Our continued mission is the best possible education for all Alberta students.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Halvar C. Jonson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Halvar C. Jonson
Minister of Education

Attachment

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Executive Summary

In February 1994 Education Minister Halvar Jonson released the provincial government's Three Year Business Plan for Education: Meeting the Challenge. It outlined the government's directions for our education system as we move into the twenty-first century.

The plan establishes a more open and accountable education system as a key goal for improving education for Alberta's students.

To help achieve this goal, Education Minister Jonson, in March 1994, established an MLA Implementation Team on Accountability. The I-team, chaired by Victor Doerksen, MLA Red Deer South, also included Jocelyn Burgener, MLA Calgary-Currie, and Mark Hlady, MLA Calgary-Mountain View.

The MLA I-team's mandate was to consult with Albertans and provide the Minister with a report that indicates the results information people want and need to know about our education system, and how this information should be communicated and used to improve education.

The MLA I-team concluded its consultations with Albertans in March 1995, and at the end of April submitted "Accountability in Education" a report to the Minister of Education. The report made recommendations that reflected the comments of Albertans to the I-team.

The MLA I-team also consulted with a Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Committee (MSAC). This included receiving advice based on the results of the consultations with Albertans.

It also should be noted that the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) has completed a task force report on accountability. The task force report is available from the ASBA.

This paper outlines the Government's policy on Accountability in Education. It builds on the I-team's recommendations.

The paper also outlines the requirements for school board and school planning and reporting, and for an external review of the performance of Alberta Education. Implementation timelines follow. They outline the steps Alberta Education will take, under the direction of the Minister, to work with school boards to improve accountability at the provincial and local levels.

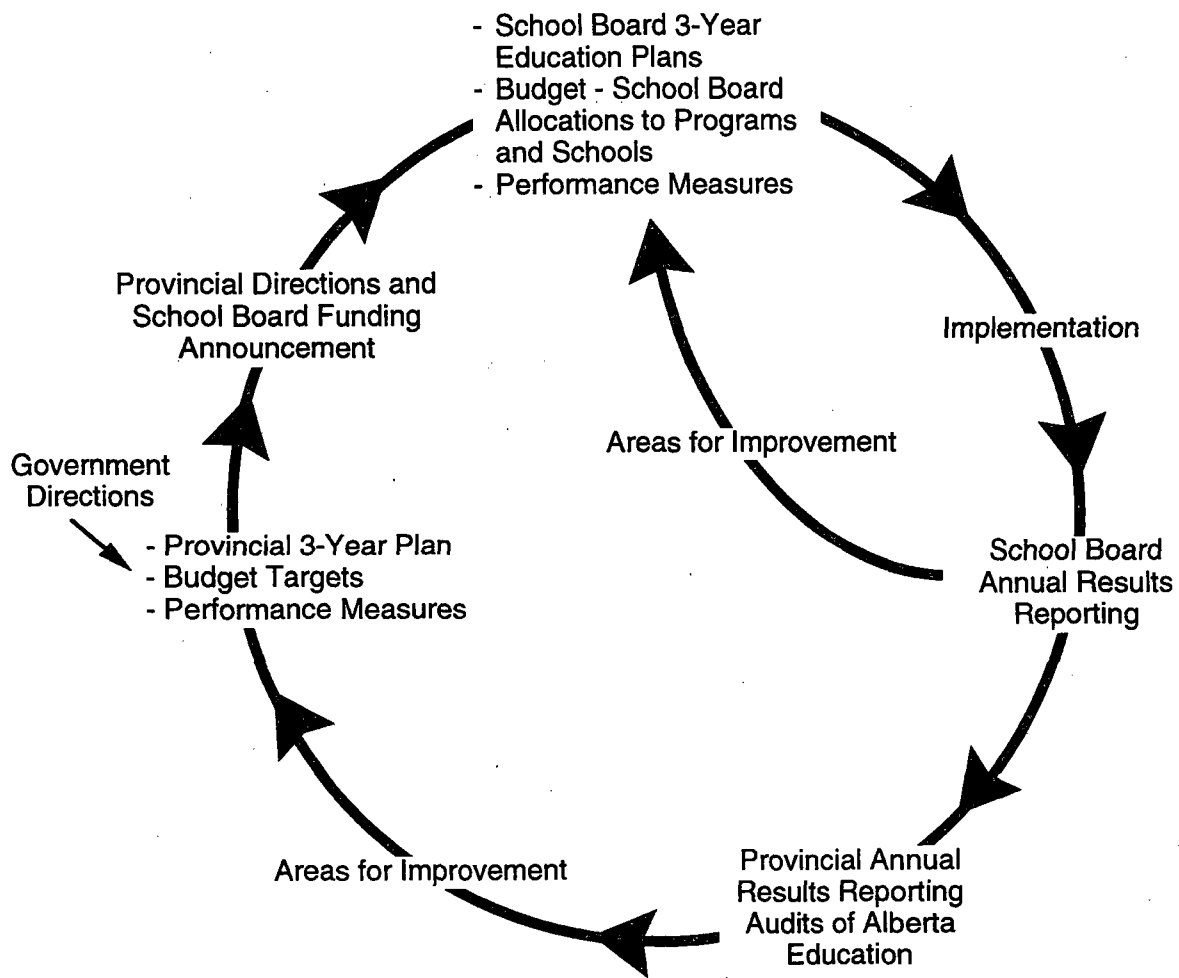
Key principles about Accountability in Education are:

- Provincially mandated goals, strategies, and measures for school boards and schools will be few in number but sufficient to ensure alignment with key provincial directions.
- Six of the nine provincial goals and eight of 40 provincial strategies apply directly to school boards for the 1995/96 education plan and beyond. The designated goals are:
 - high learning standards and quality programs for students (goal 1);
 - parental support and involvement (goal 2);
 - community support and services (goal 3);
 - excellent teaching (goal 4);
 - an efficient and effective education system (goal 5); and
 - public accountability (goal 9).
- School boards should determine additional goals, strategies and measures to reflect local needs.
- School boards will develop policies and processes for schools to address school planning and reporting.
- Schools, in accordance with board policy, should determine additional goals, strategies and measures to reflect local needs, and be responsive to advice from the school council.
- The phase-in of provincially mandated reporting requirements for school boards will start with the School Board Annual Education Reports for November 1995. The report must include student achievement, student programs, and financial information.
- School councils should be regarded as key participants in communicating local results and in suggesting ways to improve education at the school and board levels on the basis of local results.
- Alberta Education will take steps to clarify and improve the ways it is accountable. The Minister will report on the performance of the department.
- Alberta Education's performance will be reported as part of the province's annual reporting plan.

These key principles address various components of the provincial education accountability framework as shown in Figure 1 on the following page.

FIGURE I

Provincial and School Board planning, Budgeting, Assessing, Reporting and Improvement Cycle



Accountability Processes

PLANNING, GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Alberta Education

Timelines

- Updated Three-Year Business Plan published in February 1995 and annually thereafter.

Goals and Strategies

- Three-Year Business Plan for Education identifies nine provincial goals and 40 provincial strategies.

School Boards

Timelines

- Interim one year education plan for 1995/96 aligned with key provincial directions due September 30, 1995.
- Three-year education plan for 1996/97 to 1998/99 aligned with key provincial directions due April 30, 1996 and updated annually.

Requirements - Goals

- School boards are required to include six of nine provincial goals in their 1995/96 interim education plan:
 - high learning standards and quality programs for students (goal 1);
 - parental support and involvement (goal 2);
 - community support and services (goal 3);
 - excellent teaching (goal 4);
 - efficient and effective education system (goal 5); and
 - public accountability (goal 9).
- School boards should determine additional goals to reflect local needs.

Requirements - Strategies

- School boards are required to include eight of 40 provincial strategies in their 1995/96 interim education plan:
 - ensuring teachers know and can apply provincial standards for subjects/grades they teach;
 - implementing school-based decision making;
 - inservicing to facilitate implementation of school-based decision making;
 - implementation of School Councils;
 - enhancing programs and services for children with special needs, including working with other local agencies to coordinate and integrate services;

- providing professional development opportunities for teachers;
- implementation of school board education plans and annual results reports that meet provincial requirements and local needs; and
- implementation of Career Technology Studies;
- School boards should determine additional strategies to meet local needs.

Schools

Timelines

- School plans, aligned with school board plans, will be in place by April 1997 and updated annually.

Requirements

- Schools are required to include three of the nine provincial goals and relevant strategies in their education plans:
 - high learning standards and quality programs for students (goal 1);
 - parental support and involvement (goal 2); and
 - public accountability (goal 9).
- Schools, in accordance with board policy, should determine additional goals and strategies to reflect local needs, and be responsive to advice from the school councils.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND REPORTING

Alberta Education

Timelines

- Alberta Education will publish its Results Report on the Three-Year Business Plan Performance Measures in the fall of 1995 and annually thereafter.

Requirements

- Alberta Education will report on the 29 provincial performance measures outlined in its Business Plan.
- A management audit of Alberta Education will be completed to assess the performance of Alberta Education in fulfilling its responsibilities.
- The Minister undertakes to report to stakeholders and the public on the performance of Alberta Education.

School Boards

Timelines: 1995

- School boards will publish their Annual Education Report by November 30, 1995.

Requirements

- School boards are required to include the following information in their November 1995

Annual Education Report:

- provincial achievement test results, grades 3, 6, and 9, compared with provincial standards and results;
- diploma examination results, for all relevant courses, compared with provincial standards and results, including participation rates;
- programs offered in the jurisdiction, including programming for students with special needs (e.g., mild, moderate, severe, gifted);
- priorities and major initiatives in 1994/95; and
- 1994/95 expenditure summary (based on audited financial statements), including per-student spending and instructional expenditures as a percent of total spending.

Timelines: 1996 And Beyond

- School boards will publish their Annual Education Results Report on the results achieved from their 1995/96 interim education plan by November 30, 1996.
- Annual Education Results Report on the school board's Three-Year Education Plan due November 30, 1997 and annually thereafter.

Requirements

- School boards are required to include five of 29 provincial measures in their 1995/96 interim education plan and 1996 results report:
 - percent of students who achieve the acceptable standard and percent of students who achieve the standard of excellence on: provincial achievement tests, and diploma examinations, including participation rates;
 - percent of parents who are satisfied with their children's schooling and the quality of information from schools about their children's progress and educational achievement;
 - percent of students who are satisfied with: their school overall; variety and challenge in classroom and school activities; opportunities to make decisions about their learning and career paths; clarity of expectations for their learning, behavior, and involvement at school; and the help and support they receive from school staff;
 - percent of school jurisdiction spending on instruction; and
 - spending per student per school year.
- School boards should determine additional performance measures to meet local planning and reporting requirements.

- School boards will include the following information in their Annual Education Results Report:
 - aims and philosophies of the board;
 - overview of goals and strategies;
 - results and measures;
 - audited financial results (expenditures);
 - performance trends and provincial comparisons;
 - staffing and student enrollment; and
 - improvement plans.

Schools

Timelines

- School results reports, aligned with school board results reports, will be in place by November 1998.

Requirements

- Schools are required to include three of 29 provincial measures in their results reports:
 - achievement test and diploma exam results;
 - percent of parents who are satisfied with the quality of information received from school about their child's educational achievement; and
 - percent of students who are satisfied with aspects of their education.
- Schools, in accordance with board policy, should determine additional measures to reflect local needs, and be responsive to advice from the school council.

COMMUNICATING AND USING RESULTS

Alberta Education

- Alberta Education's performance will be reported on as part of the province's annual reporting plan.

School Boards and Schools

- School boards shall report annually to their ratepayers on their education plans and performance measures.
- Schools shall report annually to their parents on their education plans and performance measures.
- School councils should be regarded as a key participant in communicating local results and in suggesting ways to improve education at the school and school board level on the basis of local results.

Implementation Timelines

Item	Target Date	Comment
Minister Releases Policy Framework on Accountability in Education	June/July/95 to school boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes news release, Policy Framework on Accountability, and Interim Guide for School Board Reports (1994/95)
Interim Guide for Developing School Board November 1995 Annual Education Report	June/July/95 to school boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> outlines guidelines and requirements for boards to use in developing November 1995 school board Annual Education Report
Alberta Education's Annual Report on Provincial Performance Measures	Fall/95	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides data on the provincial measures in the Three-Year Business Plan for Education
School Board Interim Education Plans, 1995/96	due to Minister Sept./95	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes six of the nine provincial plan goals, and eight of the 40 strategies in the plan also includes five of 29 provincial performance measures (preliminary requirements) local goals, strategies and measures as determined by the school board
School Board Annual Education Report on the 1994/95 School Year	due to Minister Nov./95	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes student achievement, student programs and financial information
Mid-year Report to Treasury on Primary Provincial Performance Measures	Fall/95	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> selected education performance measures for government's report to Albertans on key government measures
Guide for School Board Education Plans and Annual Results Reports	Dec./95	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to assist boards in developing three year education plans and annual results reports for November 1996 and 1997 includes complete list of provincial goals, results, strategies and mandatory provincial performance measures boards are to address in their three year education plans in addition to local ones
Management Audit of Alberta Education	1995/96	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assesses the performance of Alberta Education in fulfilling its responsibilities documents management and business processes to assess their impact on education

Item	Target Date	Comment
Review and Feedback to School Boards on Education Plans and Results Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feedback to Boards on education plans starting Dec./95 • feedback to Boards on results reports starting Jan./96 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberta Education works with boards in a collaborative way to use the feedback to improve board education plans and results reports
Minister's Report to the Legislature on School Board Education Plans and Annual Education Reports	<p>report tabled on school board plans Feb./96</p> <p>report tabled on school board reports March/96</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summarizes findings from Alberta Education's reviews of plans and reports • reports the results of follow-up actions taken by boards and Alberta Education at the school board level • identifies issues and recommendations for action at the provincial level
School Board Three-Year Education Plans 1996/97 to 1998/99	due to Minister April/1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes the provincially mandated goals, results, strategies and measures and optional local ones
School Board Annual Education Results Report on the 1995/96 Interim Education Plan	due to Minister November/96	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes the designated provincial plan goals, results, strategies and measures as well as those determined by the school board
Updated School Board Three-Year Education Plan 1997/98 - 1999/2000	due to Minister April/97	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes the provincially mandated three year plan requirements and optional local ones
School Education Plans	April/97	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes three of the nine provincial goals and relevant strategies • also includes three of 29 provincial performance measures • additional goals, strategies and measures to meet local needs
School Board Annual Education Results Report on Three Year	due to Minister November/97	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addresses provincial requirements and those determined by the school board
Education Plan (1996/97 results) School Annual Education Results Reports	November/98	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes the designated provincial plan goals, relevant strategies, and designated measures as well as those that reflect local needs

Appendix

KEY MESSAGES HEARD BY THE MLA IMPLEMENTATION TEAM AT CONSULTATION MEETINGS

- There is strong support for accountability at all levels of the education system: provincial, school district and school.
- Some people are very well informed, others want more openness. Most people would like to have more detailed information available on request rather than detailed public reporting.
- Ensure the costs of reporting are justified by their usefulness in improving education. Staff time and dollars are not to be taken from the classroom.
- People want results reports to be linked to education plans with goals and strategies to enable progress to be assessed and reported in a meaningful way.
- People want clear and concise reports.
- School results are more important to people than district and provincial results.
- People want a small number of measures overall and only a few of these provincially mandated.
- People are saying that the provincial accountability system must recognize that some required information is already collected and reported at the local level. The accountability framework is not starting from scratch.
- School districts and schools want the flexibility to develop local measures that reflect and make sense to their communities. Flexibility is especially necessary with rural districts and small schools, as well as to those who wish to address the faith component of their school.
- People are saying academic results are not enough to judge the performance of all children. They want student, staff and school program information reported to provide a context for results and help balance academic results from achievement tests and diploma exams.
- People want reasonable timelines for phasing-in accountability requirements.
- People want results reports connected to education plans and budgets.
- People have mixed feelings about satisfaction measures. There is support for using surveys to assess student, parent, and teacher satisfaction if these are done in cost-effective ways.
- Measures of student satisfaction need to focus on their learning experiences and include graduates and dropouts.
- Measures are needed to assess parental accountability and not just parent satisfaction, e.g., parent involvement in a variety of education activities.
- Results reports need to include some valid and reliable measures of teacher accountability. Parents want more information about how teachers are evaluated.
- People want mandatory measures reported in the same way across the province. Guidelines need to be established about the elements that comprise the performance measures and on the reporting format.

- The accountability system needs to find ways to guard against data manipulation so that results are reported fairly and needed improvements are identified.
- School districts and schools use a variety of ways to communicate results and need the flexibility to continue to do this. The accountability framework needs to build on what's been successful.
- People want to be involved, especially at the school level, in selecting improvement areas and using results to do this.
- People are saying that school councils have a potential role in communicating and using results, especially at the school level.
- People see Alberta Education as responsible for many changes to education and want the department to be accountable for how these affect student learning.

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